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The Black Cat

APRIL 1911

The Devil's Glue
James Francis Dwyer

The Old Law
Batterman Lindsay

The Broken Pitcher
Thos. L. Masson

The Flute of Fate
Michael White

The Coming of the King
Eva Rice Moore

The Golden Butterfly
Kathleen Worrell

The Extraordinary Vansittarts
Frank M. Bicknell

What Happened Near Benares
Hubert Haines

Ten Cents

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The Devil's Glue.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.

LASCELLES came first to Keloa. He had evaded the Law by a circuitous route. From Tilbury Docks he had shipped in a Blue Star liner to Sydney; a French brig had carried him from that port to Noumea; while the last lap in his wild race for a safe haven was made on a bucking copra schooner beating down to Raratonga. Keloa, looking like a green umbrella whose lace trimming was the rice-white beach of glittering diamond dust, seemed an ideal retreat, and the trade-driven palms whispered a song of comfort when he came ashore.

The loneliness had just touched his soul when Delmont came. Lascelles welcomed the stranger. In strict accordance with the rule of the Fringe he asked no questions, but although his tongue was silent, his eyes gathered the information he needed. A well-bred man cannot conceal his breeding, and Delmont made no attempt to do so. Lascelles' heart filled with gratitude as he watched the other eating. In the days of loneliness he had prayed for a companion, without daring to stipulate the grade of intelligence, and in answer to that prayer a man had been sent who sipped cocoanut-milk as if it were Hiedsieck, and ate yams with

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the grace of a Beau Brummel. Lascelles wept as he watched.

Delmont was solicitous when he saw the tears. "Sick?" he questioned.

"Sick!" repeated Lascelles. "Yes, I am sick! Good God! I haven't spoken to a white man for two months!"

Delmont looked around with a shudder. The weird expectancy of the South Sea scenery gripped him suddenly. "It is lonely," he said.

"It is hell!" screamed Lascelles. "Our hell!"

The other glanced at him uneasily, but said nothing.

"Excuse me for showing such cowardice," continued Lascelles, "but this — this requires grit."

Delmont came to the same conclusion in the days that followed. It is nice to dream of coral islands where the fragrance of the golden frangipanni and the murmur of the pandanus groves lull the tired senses of the visitor, but the reality palls. The loneliness throttled Delmont as it did his companion. Both had been expelled from their Eden, and blind Justice above Old Bailey held the sword which barred their return.

In their dreams came visions of those other days. They heard the tinkle of glasses, the soft laughter of women, and the cries of boon companions, but the cobweb bridges across the ocean were shattered by the dawn. Then remorse flayed them with whips of memory, and sorrow for their sins brought little relief. Crime is the devil's glue and contrition is a poor detergent.

By tacit understanding they set a geographical boundary upon their conversation. The hatches of oblivion must be nailed down upon the dead pasts, and, in an endeavor to do so, they kept their conversation south of the Line. They discussed Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Auckland, places that seemed, like their own little prison, to be far away from the great throbbing heart of the world, but they never mentioned England.

Once Lascelles had spoken of Gibraltar, and then choked and spluttered as he noticed the blunder. Gibraltar seemed only a stone's throw from Bayswater! And Delmont had also stumbled. In the early days he had told of a commissioner at Penang who went "home," and Lascelles winced.

"Home!" he gasped. "Home? Why, he —" He sprang

up and rushed away over the prickly coral rocks where the quaint mummy-apples stood up stoutly under their load of yellow fruit. Hours after, when he returned, Delmont apologized for his offence.

It was one moonlight night, three months after Delmont's arrival, that the longing to talk of those other days battered down the barrier which they had erected. It was Lascelles who made the breach. The moon was sweeping her silver train across the ocean, and he pointed to the reflection with a shaking hand.

"Look!" he cried. "Doesn't it — doesn't it remind you of the Thames below Gravesend?"

Delmont cursed, but the desire to talk of the past swept away his anger. The flood was unloosed. The two became hysterical in their longing to chatter and compare. They flung themselves back by sheer force of will into the life from which they were outlawed. Their excited imaginations transformed their surroundings. The white beach vanished; in its place stretched the arc-lighted Strand and Piccadilly, and arm in arm they swaggered up and down and talked incessantly.

They tried to rival each other in drawing wild comparisons between the moonlit surroundings and the pictures which were fluttering through their brains like the films of a drunken biograph.

"St. Paul's!" cried Delmont, pointing to a dome-shaped rock which towered over the palms.

Lascelles choked. "And there are the Law Courts and St. Clement's," he spluttered. "Let's go down to the Mall. Laugh, damn it, laugh!"

They woke the native village with hysterical laughter. England was a million miles away if measured by the chain of Hope, and the realization made them drunk with pain. They were attempting to pluck despair from their breasts, well knowing that the attempt would prove a failure. They nodded to imaginary persons, and whispered information to each other concerning the specters of their brains.

"Billy Etherington of the Guards," murmured Lascelles; "Lord George's youngest, you know."

"Really! Chap mixed up in the Eldon scandal?"

"Yes, that's him. Funny case, isn't it?"

"I should think so. Hello, there's old Southman."

"So it is. Good-night, Freddy."

They were prancing up and down the sand with mincing steps, mad masqueraders attempting to throw off the icy hand which gripped their throats. Up in the dark pandanus groves the simple-minded islanders crept out to watch and wonder.

"Let's sing something," cried Delmont.

Lascelles agreed. They woke the echoes of Keloa with music-hall melodies. They shrieked out greetings to imaginary friends and urged them to join in the chorus. They bandied specter policemen and hansom drivers, and the moon looked at them curiously as it slipped down behind the coral bar.

The darkness chilled the blood that their unleashed imaginations had stirred to fever heat. The blue lips of the Pacific gurgled scornfully at their make believe. A rain squall squelched down from the vine-wreathed cone of old Pelau, and it splattered on the beach like derisive laughter.

Lascelles sobbed. The trickery of his hungry mind was exposed to him.

"It's no use, Delmont," he stammered. "They're not our songs — not now. Listen!"

He lifted up his fine baritone and chanted a verse of Kipling's "Broken Men." The words went out over the sobbing Pacific, and Delmont cursed.

"This is our hymn," sobbed the singer. "Listen to this:

'We sail o' nights to England
And join our smiling Boards;
Our wives go in with Viscounts
And our daughters dance with Lords.
But behind our princely doings,
And behind each coup we make,
We feel there's Something Waiting,
And — we meet It when we wake.'"

"Shut up!" shrieked Delmont. "Shut up, I tell you!"

"Why?" blubbered Lascelles. "He knew us, didn't he? We're the 'Broken Men,' Delmont! God! I didn't understand the words till I came here. Now, again!

'Ah, God! One sniff of England —
To greet our flesh and blood —
To hear the hansoms slurring
Once more through London mud!
Our towns — '"

A sob strangled the voice of the singer, and the wind whipped

a gurgle of contempt out of the snarling waves. Delmont's curses were loud and deep.

"No use of cursing," spluttered Lascelles. "We're done, Delmont. That song was written for us!"

They staggered drunkenly. The reaction was upon them. The nostalgia had the effect of drink, and they muttered brokenly as they reeled along the shore.

"Listen!" screamed Lascelles. "Hear the cursed waves? Do you know what they are saying? You don't! Listen again! Don't you hear them? They say it all day long, the same question:

'How stands the old Lord Warden?
Are Dover's cliffs still white?'"

Delmont broke away with a muttered cry and rushed up the path to the thatched huts, leaving his companion to shout his regrets and longings into the night.

Next morning they avoided each other. Fear of what they had said during the insane moments of the previous evening gripped them, and they eyed each other suspiciously. Some part of the grim skeletons may have been exposed during the momentary madness on the moonlit beach, and such a possibility suggested danger.

But Fate dragged them together before the day was half over. A missionary schooner from Levuka hove to outside the reef, and a native teacher came ashore to inquire into the spiritual condition of the people. Lascelles and Delmont had the true beachcomber's dislike to the religious person, but when the visitor opened the big box of tracts and periodicals distributed by the South Sea Mission, they sprang to attention. A bulky file of a London daily newspaper was placed upon the grass, and the two white men pounced upon it.

Over and over they rolled, the teacher making unavailable efforts to separate them or secure the cause of the disturbance.

"Halve it!" shrieked Lascelles, as the sheets tore in the clutch of the other. "Halve it, damn you, and we'll change!"

Delmont agreed, and each hugging his share of the prize, retired to his own quarters to pore over the contents.

Lascelles flung himself down on the plaited mat in the hut and stared at the sheets. The paper fascinated him. He had not

seen one for months. Greedily his eyes raced down column after column, drinking in the news, and he muttered brokenly as items of interest were clutched and digested. A dead year was being opened to him. Men had died, men had married, men had gone up and down, and the changes in the conditions of old acquaintances brought quick exclamations of astonishment from him as he read.

Suddenly he pushed his face close to the printed sheet; his eyes riveted on a photograph. With dry lips he read the paragraph beneath the cut, and then gave a low whistle of surprise as his mind assimilated the information.

"A thousand pounds reward!" he muttered hoarsely. "By Jove, he went it bigger than I thought!"

He read and re-read the dozen lines beneath the newspaper cut, then he took his knife from his pocket, clipped out the photo and the accompanying letterpress, folded the piece of paper and put it carefully away inside the cover of his watch.

"A thousand pounds reward!" he repeated again. "Only a few days after I skipped too! I wonder if he knew! I wonder if —" He stopped with a gasp and turned the faded sheets breathlessly.

The pages crackled as he flicked them over, his eyes eating up the columns. In the struggle for the file the papers had been misplaced, and he cursed as he looked in vain for the dates he wanted. They were not there. He finished with a growl of rage and sat staring at the pile of discolored sheets.

"If he has them?" he growled. "If the swine knows!"

The possibility of such a thing made the little eyes twinkle in their skull caverns as he watched the papers. If Delmont knew? With a white face he gathered up the bundle and rushed madly towards the pandanus grove where his fellow island dweller was digesting the other portion.

"Ready to change?" snapped Lascelles.

Delmont turned on his back and held up the sheets he was reading. Their eyes met as they exchanged the tattered papers. Both started to speak and both stopped. Lascelles made an effort to continue, broke off suddenly, and then snatching the other half of the file, dashed back to his little thatched house. Down on the

silver beach the native missionary was leading the brown-skinned islanders in a simple hymn, but Lascelles heard nothing but the question which his own fear sent throbbing through his brain. Did Delmont know?

He flung himself down again and started to flick the sheets. The horror of finding something that had been discovered by the sharp eyes of Delmont was upon him as he read.

"Fifth of March," he muttered. "Fifth of March. Ah! Here we are! If it was published at all it would be — *Oh, hell!*"

The last words came from him like a cry of agony. A little square hole had met his eyes as he turned the page, and now, as the peculiar trick of Destiny was revealed to him, his nerves gave way and he burst into tears.

It was too late then to adjust matters. The opportunity had passed. Lascelles and Delmont had sinned against the one commandment of the outer Fringe, and the punishment for the crime was swift.

The days that immediately followed bred suspicion. The small scraps of paper tucked in the clothes of the two absconders kept them apart. Insanely each gloated over the information he possessed concerning the wrongdoing of the other, and each tried in vain to assure his imagination that the clipping which the other had taken from the file had no reference to his case. But intuition would not be denied. The fear-stricken imagination of each painted the cutting which reposed in the pocket of the other, and the consequences haunted them.

The two remained apart. They became watchful of each other for no apparent reason — they were a thousand miles from the nearest throne of Justice. Each compared his own crime with that of the other described in the paragraphs attached to the photographs, and to the mind of each, his own crime seemed the greater. Naturally the reward would be greater. Lascelles reading the offer of a thousand pounds' reward for Delmont, wondered if five thousand had been offered for his own apprehension! Delmont's imagination set the reward upon his own head at six thousand, which was five times greater than the reward offered for Lascelles on the piece of paper he carried in his leather pouch!

Then came the news which brought about a crisis. Natives from Pilaulo brought information regarding the movements of H. M. S. *Royalist* which was cruising in the islands, and fear flamed in the minds of the two white men. The man-of-war would surely call at Keloa, and the probable action of his companion troubled the mind of each. Stories of immunity purchased by turning informer and giving evidence that would lead to the arrest of a greater criminal sprang up before the minds of both, and as each considered himself the greater criminal of the two, there were sleepless nights at Keloa while the warship was cruising down towards the island. Each knew the other's craving to return to the land from which he was outlawed, and the dread of treachery was great.

The *Royalist* was at Ninua, an island sixteen miles away, when the Fates pulled up the curtain for the last act. Lascelles, on awakening one morning, found that his companion had fled the island in the dory! Delmont was the weaker of the two, and fear had urged him to fly. He intended to make for one of the smaller islands of the group, and to find a hiding place there till the man-of-war had returned to Auckland, but the possibility of such an act did not enter the brain of Lascelles when he learned of the disappearance. His one thought was of treachery. Delmont, in his opinion, had gone to meet the warship so that he would be certain of the reward of an informer, and with hate surging in his breast he dragged out the whaleboat and set sail after his companion.

"The little rat!" he screamed. "The thieving little rat! If I catch him I'll feed him to the sharks!"

He pointed the whaleboat to the westward. Delmont had two hours' start, but Lascelles' boat was the faster. He swept through the opening in the coral reef and out into the open ocean, shouting threats and curses to the winds as the boat sped along. He was to be sold by the man he had welcomed when he first came to the island!

"I knew he had that cutting!" he shouted. "I knew that he was waiting for a chance to do this!"

The hot morning passed slowly. Lascelles ripped along before the breath of the Trades, but he saw no signs of his quarry.

Fat clouds rolled up over the horizon, but he took no notice. He only watched the red and yellow smeared ocean to the westward, over which Delmont had fled. He wanted revenge, and he troubled little about his own fate after that had been accomplished.

A speck appeared on the horizon and he raved madly. It was Delmont! Lascelles stood up and screamed his threats. He was sure of him now. The dory was coming back to him, and every minute lessened the distance. He could see Delmont crouching in the bottom of the boat, and he yelled triumphantly. His fingers clenched as he thought of the revenge he would take for the act of treachery.

The whaleboat gained fast. Lascelles was within a mile of the dory; half a mile; then he came close enough to see the white face of the runaway.

"I'll kill you!" he screamed. "You dirty informer, you!"

His words rang out loudly, and the peculiar stillness of the ocean suddenly attracted him. The wind was falling, and the surface of the water was as smooth as glass.

"Good Lord, a squall!" he screamed, and he sprang to haul down the flapping sail before the mad fury was upon him. It was coming. Out of the south it swept leaping over the water, tearing the glazed surface with a harrow of white foam, and it fell upon the two small boats like an unleashed hound.

* * * * * * *

Five hours afterwards, the first officer of H. M. S. *Royalist* entered the captain's cabin and saluted.

"The two men we picked up are conscious now, Sir," he said, quietly. "They owned up about the clippings and photographs too. Quite a find for us. Lascelles, the runaway cashier from the London and County Bank, thought the other fellow, that was manager of the Unicorn Investment Company, was coming to give us the tip, and he put after him and was catching up to him before the squall capsized both."

"Are they friendly now?" asked the captain.

"Yes, sir, quite friendly. When they came to their senses they seemed pleased that we had grabbed them. I guess it's no use dodging your gruel. Those two came far enough to

dodge what was coming to them, but the law gathered 'em in after all.

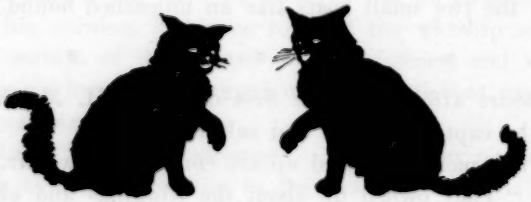
The captain lifted his finger to restrain the officer's tongue, and the two listened. Up into the warm air went the voices of a baritone and a tenor.

"That's them," murmured the officer.

The words came into the cabin and swirled out over the Pacific. It was the cry of the heart hungry for a glimpse of the home land.

"Our town of wasted honor
Our streets of lost delight!
How stands the old Lord Warden?
Are Dover's cliffs still white?"

"H'm," grunted the captain. "I'm glad they are taking their capture in a philosophical spirit, Mr. Barnes. Let us hope it will not be foggy going up the channel; I'd like to satisfy their curiosity about Dover's cliffs before the Old Bailey gets a grip of them."



The Broken Pitcher.*

BY THOS. L. MASSON.

I MADE it a rule to fall in love with a handsome girl every year. This is the proper intellectual and emotional substitute for an annual vacation.

It is true that the elements which go to make up handsome girls are all the same. But the combinations are different. Hence the interest and excitement.

I confess that I was not always understood. Some of them have foolishly thought that the arrangement was to be permanent. But —

I say this in no spirit of vanity, an ordinary acquaintance with the world has given me a certain polish. My education is fairly good. In conversation, I always know when to drop the subject; this by the way is talent. I was born with it. Such a thing cannot be acquired.

I am also fairly well off — a great help in present time of trouble.

One learns by experience to exercise a certain amount of caution. It is only by attention to details that one commands the highest success. I never write letters, for example.

I was sitting one afternoon in my motor car in front of the W —— Inn, waiting for my chauffeur to obtain some cigars, when a handsome girl came out. My observation has been fairly well trained, and after a brief survey, I concluded immediately that she would answer the purposes of my next annual vacation. She was dressed with great care, and with the air of one who had been born to certain necessary things. In a moment she had disappeared in a cloud of dust.

My chauffeur came out just then, and I ordered him to follow. Fortunately my car is seventy horse-power.

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The handsome girl got out and ascended the steps of a house on Fifth Avenue. I took the number and repaired to my club, where I had a leisurely luncheon.

There is a man in my club who is perfectly invaluable — a sort of human directory. He knows the names of all the really best people, and what is more to the point, he knows their houses.

"James," I said, puffing my cigarette, "who lives at —— Fifth Avenue?"

"The Pollertons, sir."

"There is a Miss Pollerton."

"Miss Helen, sir."

"She is not engaged."

"I believe not, sir."

"Her father — ?"

"Is in the Street, sir."

"They go in summer — ?"

"To Bar Harbor, sir. They also have a place at Newport."

"And Europe?"

"Every other year, sir. This is their year I believe."

"The steamer directory, James."

"Right here, sir."

I ascertained that the Pollertons were to sail on the 22d. It was now the 20th.

I was at the steamship company's office in an hour.

There was of course nothing left.

I immediately called upon Mr. Pollerton at his office. Fortunately he was in.

I greeted him pleasantly and gave him my card.

"I am the young man who is in love with your daughter."

"I have never heard of you before, sir," he said in surprise.

I smiled.

"Is there anything remarkable in that?" I replied. "How much do you see your daughter? Is it customary, sir, for American men to know all the young men who happen to be in love with their daughters?"

"Um. I suppose not. What is it that you wish?"

"You and your family are booked to sail on the M —— on

the 22d. You have three rooms and you yourself have a separate room."

"Well, sir?"

"There are unfortunately no other rooms left."

"Well, sir?"

"Would you mind giving up your room to me, and I shall be glad to make all the arrangements for you on some other steamer?"

"Isn't this an extraordinary request — from a stranger?"

I smiled again. The obtuseness of the man amused me.

"Only seemingly so," I replied. "It must be obvious to you that my society will be more interesting to your daughter than yours. She sees you every day, or can if she likes. She has always had you around — even since she was born. You are an old story to her. Now I am new — capable of any amount of devotion. Consider, sir, your duty in the matter."

"There is something in that," he observed. I was writing out the check for the amount of the passage.

He gave me his booking in exchange, and thanking him, I hurried off to his daughter. I had previously ascertained (through James) that she would be at home up to four o'clock. This seems to be a small matter, but in affairs of this sort, it is the looking ahead and making arrangements beforehand, that counts. That is where so many fail where I have always succeeded.

I sent up my card, and when she came down greeted her pleasantly. She was naturally cool. They always are at first.

"I am the young man that your father wishes you to marry."

"I have never heard of you before, sir."

I mentioned my club, and told her a number of her friends with whom she was intimate.

"You do not believe me?"

"I am at loss to understand you — never having met you before."

I produced the booking.

"Your father's room — you are aware of it?"

"Certainly."

"Here it is — he has turned it over to me. That ought to be evidence of his great love for you — and his confidence in me."

"Why should Papa wish to give up his room to you?"

"Didn't you wish it?" I asked in surprise.

"Why should I?"

She had evidently inherited her father's obtuseness; but I rather liked her for it. It is just as well for a handsome girl to be reasonably ingenuous.

"Do you mean to say," I asked, "that you would rather have your father accompany you than myself? Now I put it to you fairly and squarely. Reflect. Your father is always with you — or could be. He is an old story," I added triumphantly. Why should I vary that phrase? Always in an affair of this sort, move along lines of least resistance. One needs all of one's energies for critical moments.

"I will promise not to bore you," I added rather superfluously. "If I do, have me thrown overboard. I can swim you know."

"Poor Papa!"

"Is delighted at the idea of your going without him. By the way, don't mention the matter to him. To praise him for such an unselfish act might set him up. Never praise your papa to his face."

I passed the next two days pleasantly, buying waistcoats and cravats. Both being made to order, I kept an entire establishment busy night and day. Every one ought to do this occasionally to foster trade, and keep the masses contented.

On the second afternoon out I was holding her hand under a steamer rug, while her mother was playing bridge down below.

"Am I the only girl that you ever loved?" she asked. I have often, by the way, noticed that a girl reared in Newport and Upper Fifth Avenue is just as likely to make a remark like that as the most bucolic dairymaid.

"Can you doubt it?" I responded fervently.

"No, but I like to have you tell me so."

"I love you dearly," I said, good humoredly.

"Then you must marry me."

I started. Such an idea had never occurred to me, as you may imagine.

"But my dear little girl —" I protested.

"I mean it. You must marry me at once. I am sure from

what you have told me that Papa wishes it, and, of course, Mama will not object. There is a clergyman on board. The ceremony must take place at once."

I shuddered. For once in my life I was thoroughly taken aback.

"Consider what you are saying!" I replied. "Why no one marries now."

She laid her hand on my arm.

"Now, dear, I may be old-fashioned about it, but I have made up my mind. It must be done."

Her absurd notion was growing on her. I wanted time to think.

"We are going to have a storm," I observed as nonchalantly as I could. "Don't you think, darling, we would better go below?"

"We are certainly going to have a storm unless you consent at once."

I was growing more nervous. It seems absurd to say it, but there appeared, even for me, to be no escape. It only goes to show that no system is proof against time. It had to come. I realized it, at the same time I was bound to die hard.

"Come, come," I said, "you are not well. The ocean has affected you. I—"

She waved to a passing attendant.

"Send for the Captain."

"But, darling—"

I passed the next few moments trying to argue with her. But when a girl like that is actually bent on marrying one, what is one to do?

The Captain came. The situation was briefly explained. He naturally sided with her. In an hour every one on shipboard was apprised of the approaching ceremony. In two hours we were one.

Even to this day I cannot forgive myself for it.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

Two weeks later I was sitting in the breakfast-room at Baden-Baden with my bride. Charming place that. It had required the utmost strength of character for me to accustom myself to the

new conditions. But after all, what is life without character?

There was a slight lull in the quiet buzz of conversation. At this moment it occurred to me to ask her a question which I had been waiting for her proper mood to answer.

"Pardon me, darling," I said, "but would you mind telling me something of which I am very curious to know? Just between ourselves, you know."

"Certainly not," she replied, with a charming smile.

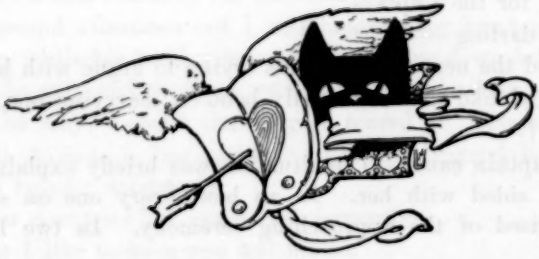
"Would you mind, then, telling me why you insisted upon marrying me? It may seem inconsequent on my part, but I really wish to know."

She leaned forward and her voice lowered.

"Don't you know?" she whispered.

"No."

"For two reasons. First, because of your simplicity, your unselfishness and your modesty. Then again, I just couldn't bear the thought of your breaking any other girl's heart."



The Coming of the King.*

BY EVA RICE MOORE.

THE pastry cook of the Saturn Restaurant bent over the big kitchen table, setting the sponge for her Parker House Rolls. She was a pretty little woman with big, pathetic brown eyes and hair already graying about her face, although she was scarcely thirty-five, for Care and Mrs. Rossiter had been close acquaintances for many a year.

The air of the kitchen was quivering with heat from the immense ovens and steam tables, and all kinds of food odors blended in one distracting whole. The room was poorly lighted by a few gas jets, and the smoky walls receded in cavern-like depths; a great contrast to the brilliant dining-room, fascinating glimpses of which momentarily showed as the waitresses passed back and forth through the swinging doors. The rattling of the dish washers, the laughing and joking of maids and men, and the calling of orders was almost deafening.

Her dough thoroughly kneaded, Mrs. Rossiter covered the pan with a white cloth, from which she had first shaken a pair of water bugs, and took her way aimlessly toward the dining-room. There was a dark corner next to one of the doors, where she could stand unnoticed, and every time the door swung open, the dining-room was partly revealed for a small fraction of a minute. Every night for some time, at half past eleven, she had taken her station there for a few minutes, to rest before starting at her pies. It was then that the tables were filled with a gay crowd from the theatres, and the doors were constantly swinging.

The waitresses sometimes confided to her while passing through the identity of some of the patrons; theatrical stars, chorus girls, millionaires, bankers, society and literary people and so on. Dan, the Kid (he was five feet nine, but only sixteen), who

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brought out the heavily laden trays of dishes from the tables, sometimes gave her a pointer, too. He kept a sharp lookout for the great and the near great.

The tables in the dining-room were mostly of one size, large enough for parties of eight or ten, but there was one exception. In the corner adjoining the kitchen corner, which Dan called "Mis' Ros'ter's private box," separated by a thin partition, was a small table set for two persons, and nearly every night for a month back the same two men had come to this table at half past eleven.

Mrs. Rossiter had never seen their faces, but she had become acquainted with their voices. It had begun with curiosity to know what they were talking about in such low tones. Her hearing was very acute. Wakeful nights she had spent listening to and identifying sounds until it had become fascinating to her. She had soon discovered that one man came there for information which seemed of the greatest importance, and the other man came to impart that information.

She soon had begun to look forward to the coming of these men and await the instructions of the one as anxiously as did his companion. It was not always easy to catch every word he said. In the middle of a sentence, when she did not want to miss a word, Mame or Maud would whisper to her to look at somebody's new style of hairdressing or the latest thing in hats.

As she waited in her corner, she began to think that this was one of the few nights when the people in whom she was peculiarly interested were not coming. So she used her eyes instead of her ears, and this was what the swinging door disclosed: a gay theatre party so close that she could see the powder on the women's faces. My, but they were handsome, those women, in spite of their artificiality. They were young and beautiful, round and rosy, all but one.

Mame told her, coming through, that the two prettiest ones were actresses — she told their names — and the big man was Judge Ramsay and the mannish-looking woman was Mrs. Judge Ramsay, and the other men and women were society folks.

"That's the new judge of the Supreme Court," whispered Dan knowingly, motioning with his head as he kicked the door and

swung through with a bushel or two of dishes piled high on his tray.

"Ramsay!" That name set her tingling all over. "Ramsay!" That had been *his* name, and he had been a lawyer. Yes, there was a resemblance; as the door swung open again, she had time to note it, but she never would have thought he would get so fleshy. He looked a little worn and tired, too, and not so well satisfied as one might expect a judge of the Supreme Court to be. And that big, bony woman, with the hard, black eyes, was his wife! Well, she looked as though she would make things hum if they didn't go her way.

"Poor Will!" As the door shut him out of sight, she felt a tide of pity flow over her for this man, and then she began to question her own feelings. "I never so much as felt faint," she thought, "and I used to think it would about kill me to even think of him with another woman. I'm getting hard-hearted, I believe. All I think of is pies and rolls and muffins — goodness me, the oven must be hot!" and she hurried away to the flour barrel and lard bucket.

When the gay and giddy crowds had all departed, and the dining-room was left to darkness, and Mame and Maud and Dan and the two men dishwashers and Annie, the short-order cook, had all gone home, Mrs. Rossiter still labored on, her stiff, tired fingers molding pie-crust and preparing the fruit for filling. Her only apparent companions were John, the watchman, who looked in now and then, and the restaurant rats, who scurried across the floor at her approach or sat in corners watching with their beady eyes to see where she put those toothsome pies.

She was scarcely aware of their coming and going, however. Her fingers were manipulating pie-crust and muffin dough: but from long practice they did it automatically without aid from her thoughts, which were busied with the children of her brain, little Gladys and Myrtle and Roy and Glen. Sometimes there were others, but always these four. They sported around her whenever she was alone. Their eyes were lighted with love for her, their fingers flew to do her bidding. They filled the pie plates and tucked in the crust. Their silky curls brushed her shoulder when peeping at the pies in the oven, and sometimes she laughed

at the capers they cut up when the pies came out golden brown. Oh, they were great comforts, those dream children. They never were naughty or grew any older. They were hers and hers alone; hidden in her heart they were safe from all harm or shadow of change.

Before other people were beginning to think of arising, she went home to her little attic room high above the city's noise. Her one room was furnished with good taste and good furniture, and when she next emerged from it, at four o'clock in the afternoon, she was dressed in the habiliments of a woman of fashion. Her dress perfectly fitted her very good form, and with her pretty hat, loosely puffed hair and big brown eyes, she looked about thirty.

"All I lack is the automobile," she smiled back to her mirror. But she took a car, to the park, and there she strolled about and sat about, and along came the carriage of the king: that is, she called it that to herself: but it was only the carriage of the prosy, good-natured looking judge and his hard-featured wife.

And he saw her. She pretended not to see, but she knew that he turned around and gave her a long, contemplative look. And the expression on his wife's face wasn't pleasant to see.

Mrs. Rossiter went home smiling to her dream children.

The next afternoon she took the same car to the same park, and the king came along again, alone, and this time he was not riding. Kings sometimes walk. So do judges. He looked at her with a puzzled expression as he sauntered by. Had she changed so much that he did not remember her? Maybe he did not want to. Maybe he didn't dare.

She went back to her dream children and she did not go to the park for a week, and when she did, she took the children with her. The park was very dreary that day. She found out afterward that he had gone to Europe.

One day she decided to take a larger apartment. It began to seem crowded to her in that one room with all those children. They liked to play hide and seek and I spy, and how could they do it in such confined quarters? So she took an apartment of three rooms on the ground floor where there was a little yard.

"Have you any children?" demanded the landlord, sternly.

"Five — or — six" she stammered, but seeing refusal in his

malignant eye, she hastened to explain: "They are not alive, though."

"Oh," he exclaimed, astonished but much relieved. He seemed strongly in favor of dead children.

"You are all alone?" queried the landlord, insatiate for information. "Your husband's dead?"

"Oh, yes, very much so. I mean," she explained, "He's been dead five years."

"What was his business? Seems as though I'd heard the name — Ros'ter."

"It's Rossiter," she explained, spelling the name. So many people abbreviated her name. She was glad it wasn't spelled with two o's.

Shortly after this she gave up her "private box" at the restaurant. The two men whose conversation had been of so much interest to her in more ways than one ceased to come to that table. It was now occupied after the play by couples of opposite sex whose conversation could not possibly be considered edifying or instructive to any one but themselves. Considerable of it was carried on by soulful glances.

"You just ought to see 'em, Mis' Ros'ter," Dan would exclaim sometimes; "they just nibble at the good things, and feast on one another's eyes."

Mrs. Rossiter looked at the evening paper each evening after this. Particularly was she interested in European news. She wondered every night that Judge Ramsay's name did not appear as taking part in some grand function in Europe. She wouldn't have been surprised if she had seen an account of some emperor or other knighting him, or, at least, giving some grand entertainment in his honor. But the weeks rolled by and nobility and royalty were apparently unaffected by the knowledge that Judge Ramsay of Cleveland, U. S. A., was in their midst.

The summer nights were very warm and the fires in the restaurant kitchen made the air almost unbearable. Mrs. Rossiter, with the big drops standing on her forehead, worked alone, after the others had left, excepting for the rats, who never deserted her. She hadn't the heart to bring the children into the slithering heat.

At four o'clock one hot morning she was through her work, but

some of the pies were not done, and she would have to wait for them. She had donned her respectable street suit that she wore back and forth from work. The evening paper lay on a window ledge, and she remembered that she hadn't half looked it over. There wouldn't be anything anyway about any one she knew, but just to pass the time she picked it up.

What! On the front page, in big headlines, she saw — *his* name. Then she flickered with her handkerchief the mist obscuring her eyes, and read the heading:

Fatal Automobile Accident near Paris
Judge Ramsay and Wife of this City
In the Party

According to the account which followed, the automobile had collided with a train, and Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Brown of Boston, Mass., had received fatal injuries. Judge Ramsay and the others were only slightly hurt.

How her heart ached for her king. But he seemed nearer. He was in trouble; that was something she could understand. She hurried home to lie awake for hours with his trouble. Not for worlds would she have confided it to the children. Sorrow must not touch them ever so lightly if she could help it. Her motherly heart would carry it all.

The work in the kitchen was cruelly hard for her, and one day in July it occurred to her that as business was dull — many people being out of the city on vacations — she might take a vacation. Something within her clamored for different scenes. It was not the Call of the Mountains nor the Call of the Sea, but just a commonplace Call of the Country, for green fields and shady lanes instead of stone pavements and an oven-heated kitchen.

Of course, she had the parks for an hour or two in the afternoon, but that was only a taste. She wanted a full draught and many of them, day after day, until she was satisfied. And the children needed it, too. Why, they didn't know what a green field looked like. How doubly delightful to see nature with their eyes as well as her own.

She wrote a letter to the strangers who owned the farm where she had been born and reared, and they offered her board and lodging for one dollar a day. They only received adults. Chil-

dren, they explained, they had found undesirable boarders. They injured the trees, tramped down the grass, frightened the hens and stole the eggs. She smiled at the thought of her children doing any of these dreadful things.

When she arrived, the people at the farm seemed surprised at her elegant traveling hat and gown. She had engaged the little attic room. They did not know that she wanted the children to hear the rain on the roof, and see the sun rise as it only could be seen from that high window; and that in that room she had read aloud to the dream companions of her childhood and taught them the lessons she had learned at school. And it was there she had dreamed of *him*.

That first night while she laid looking out at the friendly stars, another woman made the pies and rolls in the sweltering restaurant kitchen, and her late fellow workers gossiped about her in pauses of work.

"Pity *we* can't take a vacation," said Maud.

"And pay a dollar a day for board," added Mame.

"'Tisn't everybody has a bank account," said Annie, the short-order cook, "but her man left her three thousand dollars, an' it was about time he done somethin' for her. She slaved the two years they was married after he run through with her money. Yes, she had property; her father left her two or three thousand dollars an' a interest in a farm besides: but it all went. Ros'ter was a born spender."

"How did he ever spend all that money?" repeated Annie, when, after a time, the conversation was resumed.

"Why, he gambled an' he drank, an' he struck her more than once when he was in liquor, too. How do I know? Why, my sister used to work for her. Funny, isn't it, how things work round. Now, she's slavin' here along o' me."

After two weeks a letter came to the proprietor of the Saturn Restaurant from Mrs. Rossiter asking for another two weeks of absence, and her request was granted. He was too fearful of losing her altogether to refuse such a favor.

And in the last week of her stay, the king came — came just as he had many and many a time in the old days. This time he knocked on the door.

She was sitting on the veranda, and she had on a white gown and looked rather girlish and forlorn.

He had called to see about a room and board, and that arranged he came out again on the veranda, and Mrs. Johnson, the lady of the house, introduced him to Mrs. Rossiter and then went back to her fried cakes.

He smiled and looked intently at her. "It seems as though I ought to know you," he said tentatively.

"Yes," she said, and her smile was rare, "Roy Curtis was my brother."

"You were the little sister" — his thoughts seemed coming slowly — "Roy's little sister." Evidently he could not remember her name. "You used to sit in that corner of the veranda studying your lessons."

He could not bring up another vision of her in those days. She had been a quiet little girl, never entering into the life of her big brother and his boy friends. Roy and he had gone to college together and then Roy had died, just upon the threshold of a career.

Her dream children heard all about him that day; how large and grand and gentle he was, and how much he had thought of Roy, and how well he had remembered Roy's sister. Then, when the children had grown tired of her stories, and she had put them all to sleep in beautiful white, lace-trimmed beds, and tucked in the covers, and kissed the eyelids that wouldn't stay open, she leaned back and indulged in a long reverie. In the days long gone her brother's friend had always been her ideal, the hero of all her young imaginings, and he had gone out into the world and done things — while she — well, she had done what she could.

The next few days she accompanied him all over the place. There were long walks in the shady lanes, under the sun and under the moon, tramps in the woods after berries and fishing excursions from which they returned weary in body but light in heart.

The judge was interested; he was making her acquaintance. She was only renewing his; she had studied him in those other years when she sat on the veranda with her books.

Saturday she was going back to work.

"At teaching or some art work, perhaps," ventured Judge Ramsay.

"Yes, at the only art I understand, the art of making pies, cakes and rolls."

"At a cooking-school?"

"No, I make food such as hearty men like you require when overwearied, with the exertion of seeing a play, for instance. I am pastry cook at the Saturn, working nights."

His face never changed. His eyes were inscrutable. He might have been trying to imagine what a restaurant kitchen was like.

"Is there no other way?" he asked, at length. "With your education, you might teach — "

"I thought of that first," she replied, "but I had no influence, and that seemed to be so much more important than ability."

Nothing more was said, but his words started a new train of thought, and she hummed a little tune the while she packed her trunk, as though she was returning to the pleasantest place and the most delightful occupation in the world; and every little while she laughed right out. She evidently had a secret that even the children did not share.

When she reappeared in her rôle of cook, it was for as short a time as would be necessary for another to be found, for she was going to resign her position and retire to private life.

"An' use up that three thousand dollars," commented Annie to Dan. "She'd better work while she can, an' keep her money for a rainy day."

"Mebby she's gettin' reckless," remarked Dan, "an' is going to have a good time while she can an' let the rainy day take care of itself."

The judge called to see her several times that winter, but never found her in. Sometimes he thought he caught fleeting glimpses of her at the theatre or in a carriage or sleigh, but he thought he had been mistaken until one day he met her walking, and he knew it was her face he had seen. He noted that she was in silk attire and that she looked happy and care free. He walked beside her a few steps, and she told him that she was going to the farm in June.

Mrs. Rossiter went out to the old farm in June, and found a new, beautiful world. The trees were all young and tender with their baby green leaves. The same robins were in the lilacs, and a pair of orioles nested in the old elm on the hill back of the house.

Her brown eyes sparkled at all she saw, but she did wish the judge was there to share her delight. And she sat upon the veranda in a white dress day after day, hoping for his coming. She wanted him to find her there when he came.

One day a city business man drove up in an automobile and alighted. He said that Judge Ramsay, a particular friend of his, had told him there was good fishing out that way, and that he and his wife could likely put up at the farm.

"Yes," she said, "he could stay if their simple fare would suit him. "And the judge," she asked, striving to speak in a matter-of-fact manner, "will he be coming later?"

"Out here? Hardly think so," replied her auditor. "He has other business on hand just now. He was married last week to Samantha Jelke. Know her? Well, it's the rummest match. She's older than him, five years or more and homely as sin, but she's got money."

He continued in a low, confidential tone, "Ramsay told me some time ago that he'd got to have money. His wife was owing a lot of debts when she died, and he's been ever since paying them up, and they're not all paid yet, and a judge of the Supreme Court has got to live in some kind of style, you know."

"Yes," she said, and her voice sounded to her like that of some one else and a long way off, and the whole earth around seemed sliding away from her. She pressed her elbows down hard upon the veranda railing, and rested her head that was so tired upon her hands.

The city man took a seat upon the steps.

"Money's a mighty handy thing to have around," he moralized. "You can do without poetry, music or love, but you can't do without money, not and live."

"No," she said. Her voice seemed getting a little nearer and more familiar.

"Nice place this," the man went on. "The Judge told me it

was a good deal run down," and he looked perplexed at the velvet lawn and handsome modern house and barn.

"I had it fixed over some," she said, brightening up. "This old-fashioned veranda is about all that's left of the old house. It's remodeled inside, too, open fireplaces and — "

"You own it then," he interrupted. "I thought perhaps you were Mrs. Rossiter."

"I am Mrs. Rossiter."

"But I thought."

"I will tell you all about it," she said. "I've got to tell somebody." Then she told him of the kitchen corner where she had sometimes watched the interesting crowds that frequented the Saturn Restaurant, and of the two men who sat at the table close by, and their low-voiced consultations; how she had profited by the advice given by one as to the buying of stocks, starting in with half her little capital of three thousand until she had reached the one hundred thousand dollar mark.

"I was going to stop then anyway," she continued, "but the men ceased coming. I suppose I ought to be contented, with my home back and all that money — fifty thousand in the First National and fifty thousand in the Bank of Commerce — and she smiled a wan smile and looked down the road up which the king would never, never, come to her.

The city man, thanking her for her confidence, remembered an engagement and hurried away, and while getting the automobile under way, remarked incidentally that she would soon see his wife and himself out there, and he knew she would like his wife, and his wife he knew would like her immensely. Then he whizzed away, muttering to himself:

"What a fool William Ramsay was — a woman like that — and money!"

Mrs. Rossiter arose from the corner of the veranda where about a century before — it seemed to her — she had sat studying her lessons.

"How can I tell the children!" she said.

The Extraordinary Vansittarts.*

BY FRANK M. BICKNELL

"THE others might have come in the night," suggested Mrs. Jopp.

"I don't see how — without my hearing them, when the lightest sound is sure to wake me," objected Miss Jopp; which argument, if not wholly convincing, yet had weight.

The Jopps, mother and daughter, were rather more than casually interested in their new neighbors. The upper back windows of the Jopp house overlooked the "Hermitage," occupying, with its high walled enclosure, a large corner lot in the next street. The family, which had seemed to consist of one member the first day, had increased to four the second, and contained no fewer than six persons the third; yet of them all only Mr. Vansittart — said to be a retired "professional" man — had been seen to arrive.

He had appeared Monday morning in a carriage with two trunks, an express wagon with three others following, and not another thing, animate or inanimate, had gone into the house unless it had escaped the sharp eyes of the avid Jopps. Mr. Vansittart was a quiet, colorless, elderly man with no striking feature except a very bald head. His smoothly shaven face wore a melancholy air which seemed never to leave it. The Jopps, gazing down at him that first day, as he slowly paced along the weed-grown walks of the garden, had formed the conclusion that he was a forlorn bachelor — or possibly widower — come to end his solitary days in the long vacant Hermitage. This idea was destined to undergo considerable modification.

Early Tuesday morning Miss Jopp caught sight of a woman, red-haired and florid-faced, clad in a calico gown, and evidently a servant. Twice or thrice this person appeared at the side

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door of the house with a broom or dust-cloth in her hands, and later above stairs opening or closing windows. Except that Mr. Vansittart showed himself in the garden for a few minutes, the afternoon passed without indications of life till six o'clock. Then a man came forth, bringing a table which he set down under a tree near the wall where the latter divided the Hermitage grounds from the Jopp estate. He wore a plain dark livery, his black hair was brushed with painful neatness, and his mutton-chop whiskers were of a length — or a shortness — exactly proper to his station.

Unfortunately for the curious Jopps, he placed the table so very near the wall as to make all but one edge of it invisible to them, no matter how much they might stretch their necks. After he had spread upon it a white cloth he went back to the house, shortly to reappear with a tray-load of covered dishes. Several more trips he made, bearing finally to the garden a coffee-urn and spirit lamp. Then, casting a last critical glance over the result of his labors, he disappeared into the house.

"He has gone to announce dinner; Mr. Vansittart will come out now."

Miss Jopp's natural inference proved not to be entirely accurate. Quite fifteen minutes must have elapsed when there appeared upon the scene, not the bald man, but a stately old gentleman in evening dress. With his carefully arranged white hair and mustache, his glittering monocle, his snowy shirt-front, spotless waistcoat and lustrous patent leathers, he was from head to foot the acme of elegance.

"What an aristocratic-looking old man!" commented Mrs. Jopp. "He might be an English lord, mightn't he?"

Miss Jopp's admiration was no less fervid. "Yes, indeed," she said; "isn't he superb? He carries himself with such a grand air — oh, dear!"

The spinster's lament was caused by the eclipse of the stately old gentleman by the high wall under the shadow of which he now, presumably, had seated himself.

"Isn't that too vexatious!" complained Mrs. Jopp. "We might have watched him dining if — I wonder where Mr. Vansittart is? It's strange he doesn't come out too. And

the servant, why doesn't he come and — and serve ?"

Miss Jopp did not reply, for just then she discovered that the old gentleman had begun his meal.

"I can hear the knives and forks clinking," she announced. "How strange ! how perfectly funny !"

"You don't suppose, do you," hazarded Mrs. Jopp, "that this is another Mr. Vansittart ?"

The idea seemed to impress her daughter. "Why, sure enough !" she responded. "I shouldn't wonder a mite ; there's a likeness, come to think of it. The two must be brothers. I hope they're not on bad terms. It's odd they shouldn't dine together."

Alone and unattended, the old gentleman went on with his dinner, while the two women, tantalized at being unable to observe his table manners, remained at their post futilely till dusk had fallen and deepened into night. It was too dark to see anything when finally they heard sounds indicating that the table was being cleared; then silence ensued and, save for one rather dimly lighted window, the Hermitage might well have been as empty of life as it had been before the advent of the Vansittarts.

Wednesday forenoon the Jopps, whose light domestic duties did not hinder their keeping practically a constant lookout, got small satisfaction, seeing only the two servants and the bald man; of the white-haired aristocrat they were not afforded even the most fleeting glimpse. In the afternoon there came out upon the unkempt lawn in front of the house a woman who remained in view long enough for the Jopps to note that she was gray-haired and wore a black gown and apron; and it was decided without much discussion that she must be the Vansittart housekeeper. At night, a blond, red-cheeked man in livery laid dinner on the table beneath the tree by the wall; and when all was in readiness he retired, and a white-capped, silk-gowned old lady, slightly bent and leaning on a gold-headed stick, came to dine — entirely alone.

"My sakes ! with so many servants, to let her wait on herself — it's shabby, that's what I call it !" declared Miss Jopp, indignantly.

The aged lady seemed to be a slow eater, or at least she tarried long at table, rising only after it had grown almost too dark for the watchers to discern her stooping figure on its slow return to the house.

During the next two days several additional members of the Vansittart household imperfectly materialized, but the only one among them whom the Jopps saw distinctly enough to identify again was a smartly dressed man with iron-gray hair and side-whiskers, who looked like a prosperous banker. Mrs. Jopp, meantime, in imitation of the worthy *Silas Wegg,* had undertaken to bestow upon each of the new neighbors a name, and this man she called Mr. Stewart Vansittart. The bald man was Mr. Charles, and the monocled aristocrat Mr. Leslie Vansittart, while the old lady was Mrs. Wingate, a widowed sister of the three. The servants in livery were James and Henry, the housekeeper was Mrs. Hodge, the red-haired woman Rosa, and a bent old man dimly seen pottering about in the gloaming was dubbed Higgins, the gardener. How all these others could have come to the Hermitage so quietly as to escape their vigilance was a puzzle to the Jopps. Not till a week had passed did the realization of yet another curious fact strike the Jopps — or rather Mrs. Jopp — with considerable force.

"Daughter," she exclaimed, "have you thought that we've never, never once seen any two of those Vansittart people together — never two at the same time?"

"Why, sure enough, so we haven't!" said Miss Jopp. "Well, I declare if that isn't the queerest thing! They do seem to be the strangest, most mysterious — I wish we could find out something definite about them."

The wish appeared unlikely of fulfilment. The Jopps had hardly more than their own eyes on which to depend for facts regarding the Vansittarts. They themselves were new-comers in the neighborhood and nobody had called on them — indeed, nearly every one was away for the summer. The tradespeople knew nothing except that the bald man came to their shops to do his own buying, and always took his purchases away with him.

The clearing of the mystery was as peculiar as it was startling.

At dusk one evening Mr. Charles Vansittart was observed to be sitting on a rustic settee enjoying a meditative smoke, and even after darkness had closed in the waxing and waning glow of his pipe remained visible. Next morning, on glancing casually out, Miss Jopp was surprised to discover that he was still sitting there; and her surprise grew quickly to uneasiness, then to something like terror. There was a peculiarity in his huddled up appearance and an unnatural pallor on his usually pink countenance that struck a chill through her. She called her mother to come and look, and a few minutes later the two were rushing out of the house. There was a physician around the corner and he came with them immediately. The wall surrounding the Hermitage had two front gates of stout oak, but the smaller proved to be unlocked. They went through it and across the garden to the man on the rustic bench. The doctor gazed at him a moment, then exclaimed in evident surprise:

"Why, it's Pentwater!"

He leaned over and made a brief examination.

"Dead!" he announced decisively, "weak heart, I surmise. Poor chap! poor old boy!"

"You knew him, then?" questioned Mrs. Jopp, looking down upon the parchment-like face of the man who, she now perceived, was considerably older than she had supposed before.

The doctor, a dignified elderly man, straightened himself and replied, with slow and impressive gravity:

"Madam, I doubt if anybody ever really knew him; a shyer, more reticent man than he could hardly be imagined."

"Who was he?" asked Miss Jopp. "You called him Pentwater; we thought his name was Vansittart."

"Very likely," assented the physician, whose mind seemed occupied mostly with memories of the past. "Yes, yes, to be sure, he might have changed it after he retired," he continued, half to himself. "Ah! me, how well I remember him in his palmy days forty years ago. He certainly was the funniest man on the stage, and the saddest one off it I ever knew. Poor fellow! poor old Pentwater! Well, well," he said, coming back to the present, "he mustn't be left here any longer. Did he live alone, do you know, or did he have a servant to look after him?"

"Oh, he didn't live alone," replied Miss Jopp. "I wonder nobody has been out from the house before this. There are four or five servants and he had two brothers and a sister."

"Eh!" cried the doctor, staring, "brothers! sister! impossible! Why, Pentwater was an orphan, a waif picked up, a tiny infant, on the shore of Lake Michigan near the town of Pentwater — that's how he got his name. He had neither kith nor kin in the whole wide world that he could claim, and the poor fellow would have given his heart's blood for even one solitary relative to call his own. He was too shy ever to get married, yet he longed unutterably for the joys and comforts of domestic life. I was perhaps as well acquainted with him as anybody — which isn't saying much — and I can assure you his case was — was positively pathetic."

The speaker stopped abruptly, unable to put his feelings into words, and blew his nose resoundingly.

* * * * * * *

When the three investigators entered the house there was absolutely not another living person there; but in a large room above stairs they made a curious discovery.

Laid out in an orderly manner upon a bed, a couch and a broad-topped table, was a quantity of clothing. There was a suit of livery with two wigs, one dark, the other light; there was a man's evening suit with a white wig and mustache; a smart business suit with iron-gray wig and side-whiskers; a lady's black silk gown with a white wig and lace cap; an alpaca dress with an apron and an iron-gray wig; a calico dress with a red wig; and there were still others. Furthermore, there was a complete theatrical "make-up" outfit lying upon a dressing-case.

"You see," remarked the doctor, as the explanation dawned on them, "the lonely old chap had no family, so he created one and impersonated it himself."

The Old Law.*

BY BATTERMAN LINDSAY.

THE elders had sat long in deliberation around the flickering council fire. There had been protracted silences, broken by seemingly casual remarks from one gutteral throat or another, until all had spoken. Then arose a patriarch, and leaning on his staff, uttered himself passionately and at length.

Bent, smoke-dried, blear-eyed, toothless, the fires of youth seemed to reanimate his shrunken frame, as he told of the past, when the Piute had been sufficient unto himself; when by the prowess of his bow, and the cunning of his snare, and the industry of his women, he had been supplied with food, raiment, dwellings and utensils meet for his need; when he was manly, temperate, self-supporting, and equal to his fate, be it good or ill.

And now, what was he? A beggar at back doors, or a prisoner on reservations; a scoff, a byword, a slave to the white man's firewater whenever he could lay hands on it. His women no longer dug roots, and cured flesh and fish, and dried berries, or wove water-tight baskets, or sewed robes of rabbit skin. They idled on the streets of the white man's towns; or, if they worked at the white man's work, spent all their gain on his gauds. And now it was come to this: yes, *this*; and he pointed his skinny, shaking forefinger at a figure crouching in the outer dusk.

Yet there were those among them who spoke of the harshness of the Old Law. Degenerates! Weaklings! Who cared not for the virtue of their wives and daughters, if their bellies were filled. Better a heap of stones on every hilltop than that their women should learn to think slightly of chastity.

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Drive her forth indeed! To what? To be the prey and the sport of the hereditary foe. That were not mercy, but a crueler doom than that of the Old Law. Let the woman expiate on the hilltop at morn, so soon as the squaws should have gathered a heap of stones sufficient unto the work.

Broken and exhausted with his passion, the old man ceased and sat down, and there was silence. After a time, a middle-aged man arose, cast his vote for the death penalty, and stalked away into the outer darkness. Then another man stood and did likewise; then another and another, until all were gone but the shrivelled denunciator and one other. Lastly, the ancient raised himself painfully from the ground and addressed the silent man across the fire. He did not seem to think it necessary to ask his opinion.

"You can guard her, for you will not sleep," he said, and hobbled away.

The women and youths who had been standing in a mute and awe-struck circle around the judges now dispersed quickly to their rest. A cur, pushed out of his warm corner by a human occupant, yelped protestingly, and a little importunate cry answered from the heap over there in the obscurity.

Out of it, a woman drew herself to a sitting posture, and lifted up a papoose case, so that the child within could take the breast. Unwitting betrayer of its mother, with its pink skin and gray eyes, what would befall it after to-morrow's dawn? When she should be lying under a heap of stones, what would they do with her baby? Nothing? Yes, that would be it. They would move camp at once, and the papoose would be left to starve, or to be devoured by coyotes. No heart would be touched by its wailing. Better it should die with her. She would hold it on her breast, and perhaps it would receive the first blow. It would not take much of a stone to crush so small a thing.

She saw it all as it would happen. With the first light, the women would be gathering rocks; the boys would help, in their eagerness to get at the sport. Then they would lead her forth and tie her to something; it would be that little juniper growing by itself on the hilltop, because it was the only thing suit-

able for such a purpose within a radius of miles. (For it was a treeless land.) Then they would gather before her in a semicircle.

She knew how every face of them all would look, wreathed in scorn and hatred. The women would taunt her. Her husband would cast the first stone. Where would it hit her? Would he aim to kill, or only to wound? No, he would not wish her to die too soon. That first one would not be a very large stone. Then they would make a target of her. The boys would wager among themselves as to the exact spot where their missiles should land.

Why should they wish to hurt her? She had never harmed any of them. The Old Law — the savage law of an inferior race striving to protect its womenkind against a superior one — yes, of course she knew of it. But when had it ever been enforced? But when, also, had she ever known it set at naught? O little fair-skinned traitor! why had she not strangled your first feeble wail? Why, even now, did she clasp you passionately to her bosom?

"Sweet sins go to cruel recompenses." She had never heard that saying, but its paraphrase was in her thought.

The grating whir of the nighthawks jarred her ear as they swooped about her in the darkness: the melancholy howl of a coyote sounded from a far hillside.

By the smouldering fire the solitary watcher sat motionless. His was the only voice she had not heard while the debate was in progress; stolid he had remained then, as now. During the hour since elapsed his mind had been following the same track as hers. The same vision had been present to his inner eye. He would fling the first stone; it was his right; but not at her. It should crush that hated thing, with curling hair and light eyes, which had made of him a laughing stock among his fellows. The Old Law was a good law, a just one. Had he ever beaten her? No, not once. Had he ever given her cause for chagrin? More fool he! You must beat a woman to make her respect you, and make her jealous if you would have her love you.

Well, he would be avenged on the morrow; he should see her

crushed and broken, hanging in her bonds: that pretty, round, smiling face streaked with a vermilion that was not paint.

What was it he once heard that priest say about forgiving? Did the white men forgive such things? He did not think it. But that old priest — he was always talking about loving those that despitefully used you.

Yes, that was how she would look hanging there with blood running over her face. He had seen a picture like it, of a man on a cross. A man that was God, so the priest said. What had that to do with this? Bad people killed Him because He was good. Good people were going to kill this woman because she was bad.

Yes, it would hurt her; she ought to be hurt. How could you love people that shamed you? How long would it take to kill her? He hoped no one would hit her in the eye; that would be bad. Would she scream? On the whole, he thought he would go off somewhere until it was over.

He threw himself on his back and looked up into the sky. Somewhere above that blue floor was a place for the Indian. So the priest said, but he had known it before. How many sparkles of light there were up there, — more and more as he continued to gaze. The blue vault seemed to open into depth beyond depth; he fancied it a series of caverns incrusted with something sparkling, like mica.

The nighthawks had ceased their whirring, but borne on the utter stillness was the silvery tinkle of bells on the team of a belated ore wagon. He heard them for a good while as the mules toiled up the long grade through the cañon below.

Sleep was sifting softly down upon him from the immeasurable silences into which he was gazing, when the little querulous cry of the infant, instantly hushed upon its mother's breast, assailed his ear. He sprang to his feet, as if shot from a catapult, and stood scowling.

A penetrating whisper reached his ear.

"Komo!"

He gave no sign.

"Komo!" it came again, faint and clear, cadenced like a death wail.

Still he was immovable.

"Kill us now!"

Motionless he remained.

The sibilant whisper came again, freighted with woeful entreaty.

"Why have you waited so long? You wished to at the first. Why did you let the old men persuade you?"

Rigid he stood.

Again the voice breathed in the darkness, hissing with scorn now.

"What shame to you! No wonder the young men laugh at you!"

Then he stirred. His hand sought his knife in the bosom of his shirt.

"Yes, they laugh!" shrilled the deriding voice.

Komo sprang forward and strode toward the crouching heap over there in the gloom. His knife was out. Kill her? Of course he would, and her brat too. What had the rest of them to do with this affair?

His hand was raised to strike, and he did not. Why? I do not know. He did not know. Does any one of us know, why, at supreme moments of his life, he does not the thing he had purposed, but some other?

Instead, he stooped and cut the thong which bound her ankles.

"Go!" he whispered hoarsely.

For an instant she lay, incredulous, bewildered; then got up slowly, staggering awkwardly upon her benumbed feet.

"Go!" he repeated, striking her upon the breast with his fist clenched on the handle of his knife.

And like a small creature released from a trap, like a hunted coyote, like the flitting shadow of a wing, she was gone.

The Flute of Fate.*

BY MICHAEL WHITE.

THIS is a story with the moral left to the reader's discernment. If any one can solve Burton's problem, then that person will see clearly the whole scheme of things without spectacles. He will no longer regard the Sphinx with wonder, and the puzzling question of which came first, the egg or the chicken, need not involve him in hot argument after midnight.

Briefly, Burton had demanded from one Gosford the settlement of an account. In default of the settlement Burton had proceeded by law to a final judgment. Such judgment gave Burton full power to seize all Gosford's property, and cast him up, a mere scrap of human driftwood on the rocks of life. A little time and Gosford might — but unfortunately Burton was metaphorically in danger of shipwreck himself, and Gosford's property would just about save him from the calamity threatening his creditor.

Perhaps Burton would not have given a second thought to Gosford's destruction, had not Gosford made a last appeal on behalf of his wife and children. They would suffer equally in Gosford's ruin. Burton did consider the suffering entailed on Gosford's wife and children, but there was also his own family to take into account. Clearly Burton must protect his own family first, and yet he did not quite like the idea of doing so by the only means available.

He began to feel sorry for Gosford, but Gosford's property was absolutely needful to his own existence. He did not take to himself the vain idea of helping Gosford subsequently, because in the scheme of things you cannot eat your porterhouse steak and restore the bullock to life. That is impossible. Gosford's circumstances were such that Burton's act meant simply the end of his usefulness in this life.

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It was while Burton was thus standing on the brink of an unavoidable, but distasteful and seemingly cruel decision, that he strolled down to a stream which swept in a sinuous curve near to his country house. It was fringed with woodland of many shades, from the dark green of an occasional pine to the bright hue of a silver birch.

On that particular June morning Burton could not help contrasting the abounding manifestations of the beneficence of nature, with the ways dark and questionable in the human mind. It seemed to him that man was the chief destroyer, even of his own kind. Otherwise in blossoming flower and joyous bird note, in the busy work of upbuilding on every side, nature strove for harmony, happiness, and life. In other words, the view of nature taken by the poet. What a pity it was man could or would not heed the lesson of nature on that beautiful June morning.

Presently Burton came by way of a thickset path to a pool formed by a bend of the stream. It was a pleasant spot, with tree boughs stretching out over the limpid water, and a glimpse of the rippling mid-stream. How different the scene was from the turmoil and keen edge of city life! Here peace and contentment might surely reign, with abundance for all. In nature's plan the need for the sacrifice of Gosford was eliminated. So thought Burton.

Then his attention became centered on a compact endless procession of little fish, no longer than a pin at the largest, slowly moving up stream in the security of the near bank. What a multitude! Whitherward bound?

Presently from under the shelter of some lily pads shot a flash of bright scales athwart the winding rope of little fish. There was a momentary confusion in the line as a pickerel with open jaws devoured several of the small fry, and then retired to his shelter. But the ranks of the little fish closed up again, and the procession moved on apparently regardless of the half-dozen Gosfords snatched from their midst.

Burton then watched the pickerel, evidently well satisfied with his murderous venture. There was doubtless no feeling of regret in that pickerel. He needed the little fish in order to exist.

In a short space a larger dark body swam cautiously up to the

lilies, as if in the act of reconnoitering. Then followed a rapid dart forward, a violent commotion, and a huge black bass emerged, leaving no trace of the pickerel, i.e. — Gosford. The bass swam leisurely around in a wide circle, for the time being having gratified his hunger for pickerel. Being a five-pound bass his need was for quite large prey.

Soon he was tempted into the sunlight of bright water. Possibly he took pride in the glitter of his scales, and the easy sway of fins and tail. Be that as it may, in a twinkle the sunlight of the air was cleft by a pair of wings, then a splash in the water, and the bass was borne aloft in the talons of a fish-hawk. The bird had caught his Gosford in the interest of a fish-hawk family.

Away up stream flew the fish-hawk, when a puff of white smoke was followed by the report of a gun from the opposite shore. The fish-hawk stopped suddenly in mid-career, for a moment beat the air wildly with her wings, and then fluttered earthward. A hunter had bagged the fish-hawk, merely an item in the chain of Gosfords.

As to the man, he stumbled over a rotten stump in reaching for the fish-hawk, and though he limped away, nature had laid her finger on him. She needed his chemical elements elsewhere.

Burton, who had watched this nature tragic play, turned thoughtfully homeward. Of a certainty nature took little heed of the Gosfords in fish, birds, or men. She was ruthless and pitiless in her systematic destruction. Apparently she created millions of Gosfords to the single end of providing sustenance for other Gosfords. Why this should be so is left to the reader.

The Golden Butterfly.*

BY KATHLEEN WORRELL.

THE natives called her Mariposa Dorada — the golden butterfly. She danced every night in one of the restaurants nestling in the shadow of the rock where the last Montezuma built his castle. Every evening tourists flocked there and looked at her with wondering delight. To them she seemed the spirit of the old Mexico they had hoped to find — the languorous, mystical atmosphere they wanted to remember.

The manager of the restaurant was something of an artist in his way. Whenever the moon was full, he had all the lights turned out, then Mariposa Dorada danced in the golden night with the reaching black shadows of a gnarled old fig-tree falling behind her on the marble floor of the patio, and broken Moorish arches rising between her and the starlit blue of the evening sky.

There was something strangely illusive and unreal about her as she danced upon the marble, making no sound.

Her dress was of some shimmering yellow stuff floating around her like gold dust, her little shoes were made of woven gold, and around her slender body was twisted a yellow silken shawl embroidered in golden passion-flowers and edged with a long silken fringe that swayed about her as she moved. Clusters of yellow roses clung in her soft dark hair and from time to time as she danced, quick golden flashes shot out from under her lashes like lightning through the summer dark. She had appealing little hands with which she seemed always to be touching the world caressingly, and the world in turn smoothed the rough places and scattered roses in the path of the golden butterfly.

There was about her an atmosphere of things forever old and forever young — the spirit of roses dead a thousand summers,

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of songs sung centuries ago. When she swayed with hands outstretched, parted lips, and glowing eyes, every movement held the spirit of youth and longing and the glamour of half remembered dreams.

The man from the hills sat back in the shadows and looked at her, his hands were clenched, his nostrils quivering, every bone and muscle ached. She seemed to be dancing before his eyes like an elf floating in star dust. He had come simply because he wanted to be among human beings. He wanted to forget himself thinking of them, and now this creature incarnate with life and vitality made him remember even more keenly than the awful isolation ever did, that he had only a raveling thread of life to cling to. He glanced down at his big gaunt body, a sigh and a cough strangled each other in his breast.

He had fought long and hard. It was a long time since the doctors had recommended a change of climate, dry air, out-of-door life. He drifted into Mexico far into the mountains. At first the cough became a little better and he went on and on, deeper and deeper into the blue country where the hills melt into the sky. Then all at once the big spaces, the desolate barrenness, began to close in on him. Sometimes when he saw a rotting cacti on the hot sand or a bone bleaching in the white glare on the mesa, a panic came upon him, the yearning for the blue ranges beyond died out and he felt nothing but the awfulness of dying there. Then hopeless at last, he took the trail back to civilization.

A nameless envy surged through him as he watched the swaying, shimmering creature dancing in the pale light. Her parted lips and glowing eyes seemed to mock him, they meant health! — life!

The soft music and the dancing of Mariposa Dorada had become part of the starlight and moonlight and mystery of the night.

No one stirred or spoke. A spell seemed to hold them. The man from the hills bent far forward and as she passed him in the dance, he caught the fragrance of her hair. Then she turned her head and for an instant looked straight into his eyes. There was a moment's pause in the dance and he saw a curious startled

look flash into her face. A bitter smile twisted his lips. "So," he said to himself, "even you are afraid of death when he looks at you from such close quarters."

He pressed his long thin fingers over his hollow eyes. Suddenly something soft and sharp struck them. He looked up startled — a yellow rose lay at his feet.

That night for the first time in many months he did not walk restlessly up and down, but drew his cot close to the open window and lay looking up at the stars with brooding eyes, thinking of the beauty and the reachlessness of them. His cheek rested on his palm and between the two lay a yellow rose.

The next night he went again but he came late. He had been walking up and down the narrow streets for hours, the dim *calles* fascinated him. Sometimes he paused beside an open door and looked into the patio sweet with roses and dim with palms. Human beings lived there and were happy or unhappy. He wondered vaguely about their lives which somehow seemed to be part of his own existence.

When the moon rose he sat down on a bench in the park in front of the cathedral and gazed up at the spires that looked like stone lace outlined against the blue.

Everything had a strange new wonder in it. His thoughts drifted back to the hills and the lonely trail. What a big world that moon was shining over! It seemed small only when one reached the places where men built closely together. But he liked the snug feeling of humans near him, though he seemingly had no part in their plans.

The cathedral bell tolled nine times. He started up, he would go to her now.

Every chair was taken when he arrived, so he leaned against a pillar and waited. The marble floor of the patio lay white and deserted in the moonlight. Mariposa Dorada was not dancing. The first half of the program was over. Behind the screen of vines the musicians were softly tuning their instruments and all around him sounded the babel of foreign tongues.

He closed his eyes, he had caught a glimpse of distant majestic mountain peaks above the walls of the patio. The sight made a yearning pain arise in him, they had taught him to love

the gift of life and had withheld it, those silent hills. His hand went to his side. How strongly his heart was beating! That brave wild heart would fight to the last. He was living yet, his hour had come, but it was not the hour of death — it was the hour of life. He had seen Mariposa Dorada.

Suddenly the sound of his own language fell on his ears. An old man seated directly in front of him was speaking to his companion, a faded gray little woman.

"What is it, Sister?" he asked, "aren't the old ghosts laid yet? I thought you had forgotten long ago or at least had ceased to care. I see now that you haven't. I am sorry I asked you to come."

The little woman stirred uneasily.

"I have never forgotten," she said.

"But," continued the old man, "it is all so long ago, almost half a lifetime."

"It has seemed longer," said the woman, drearily.

The old man shook his head sadly.

"How is it the German Heine puts it?

> "'It is a simple old story, nothing strange or new,
> But if you chance to live it, it breaks your heart in two.'

"Of course, Ellen, it has all grown dim to me long ago. But then I wasn't living it."

"No," answered the woman, "and it was all I ever had of life. I didn't let the world see what I felt when I broke our engagement. He suffered too — I know he loved me in the way men love women like me, but the moment he saw her, he began to live a life I never could have awakened in him. One look from her eyes taught him more than I could ever understand or give his soul with the devotion of my whole life. And then when he died so soon after, I tried to forget all but the happiness we had had, but it always hurt — always hurt."

"They say," interrupted the old man, "that she is as unchanging as the Sphinx — as beautiful and as young as ever."

"Vampires never grow old," said the woman harshly, "they drink the youth of other lives."

A sharp rap sounded from the direction of the orchestra. The hum of voices suddenly ceased. There was an instant silence.

Then the languorous swaying melody of a Spanish dance rang out. A flash of gold trembled in the shadows beyond the arches.

The little gray woman started up in a panic.

"I can't see her! I can't!" she whispered, "I want to go, Henry, take me away!"

When they were gone, the man from the hills sank into one of the vacant chairs. Then without a sound Mariposa Dorada floated into the white square of moonlight.

The man from the hills felt a tightening in his throat. "Vampire" that was what the little gray woman had called her — the poor little gray woman, who could not understand.

Nearer and nearer swayed the golden butterfly. He looked into her eyes. Golden lights lay in them. He felt the glow of a nameless exultation — the ecstacy of one who has reached life's heights. It seemed to him that a vague foregleam of this moment had sometimes come to him when, alone in the hills, he had watched the golden dawn flash from crag to crag till all the world was gleaming.

. . . . . .

Again the light of the full moon lay on the marble floor of the patio, but Mariposa Dorada was not there. They told each other the news with many shrugs and outstretched palms. She was gone! Married a sick American and went away with him into the hills.

. . . . . .

"Look, darling," said the man, "there below us lies the blue country."

The woman in his arms raised her head and looked down into a valley of yellow sands through which a silver band of water ran. Out of the level stretch arose great rocks like gigantic castles and fortresses. A dim blue haze lay over it all, making the savage crags look like majestic towers of carved stone with softly oxidized shadows.

The two were sitting upon a rock far up on the heights. The morning sun shone around them, opening the little pink cactus

buds, peeping through the crevices of the rocks at their feet. The man pressed his cheek close against hers.

"I half expect you to fly away into the blue, my golden butterfly."

Her fragrant soft body lay against his breast, her arms clasped his neck, her eyes were full of golden lights.

"My wings are broken," she whispered.

The man's eyes turned to where the trail leading back to the world ran over the hill like a narrow path up to the stars. Then he glanced down at the little body in his arms. How thin and white and transparent she had grown, his golden butterfly. And how monstrous selfish he had been in his restored health and strength and vitality. He threw back his head and took a deep breath. What had he ever done to deserve all this — life, health, hours, days, months of deep deliberate bliss, such as most men taste only for a moment in a lifetime and call that moment worth the price of life and death.

He looked into her eyes, deep into the golden lights, and wondered vaguely when and where it was that he had sung to her, fought for her and died for her in other far back lives. And now she had come to him in this gray world, bringing the memories with her. He clasped her passionately.

"I love you — love you!"

Only her eyes answered. Presently she raised herself and he noticed with a sinking feeling of alarm how white her lips were.

"Listen," she said, "all my life I have been what they called me, 'The Butterfly,' taking the sweetness out of lives, caring nothing for the empty calyx. Many called me heartless, they could not understand. Those who feed on the sordid become at last like that which they have fed upon. I touched only the inner sweet of each soul, but always knew that some day I must give it up, because I am a woman. Men have loved me, women have hated me, knowing I could take from men's souls that which they coveted but could not reach with their clumsy hands. Oh, I have lived! lived!"

She stretched out her arms to the blue valley.

"How beautiful it all is! How beautiful! The warm sun,

the fragrance of unseen flowers blooming around us — the great peace! Drink, beloved," she whispered, laying her lips on his, "I have saved it all for you — the sweetness of — ." Her voice trailed into silence, she sank back in his arms.

An anguished cry burst from the man, as he gathered her to his breast, calling her by every tender name he had ever given her, his voice rang out over the sunlit mesa as impotent as the breath of a flower, calling after the golden wings that had drifted into the blue.

What Happened Near Benares.*

BY HUBERT HAINES.

WHEN traveling round the world it is well now and then to show or to simulate a spirit of reverence. Primitive people are very sensitive about their customs, rites, and relics, and are not slow with the dagger or something else equally effective when these peculiarities of theirs are ridiculed.

Billy Mason, whose conduct on our circumnavigating journey has prompted these reflections, did not mean to wound anybody's feelings by his irreverences. Billy was as good-hearted a fellow as I met on our jaunt of twenty-five thousand miles. But he had a mixture of boyish mischievousness and a sense of Anglo-Saxon superiority that led him into all kinds of imprudent jests and comments concerning certain social and devotional oddities of the old world.

I besought him to curb his wit, told him a hundred times that he was a brute, and bade him remember that having undertaken the trip for rest and recreation, I had a decided objection to returning to America in charge of a corpse, and to being involved in the international complications that would result from his assassination. But every sort of preaching, even that diluted form known as good advice, was lost on Billy, and he went along with his serene overlordliness unmitigated and his caustic tongue unchecked.

Even his experience in Naples did not cure him. In that city we were one day examining various holy appurtenances of some shrine or other, on the history and efficacy of which appurtenances a sacristan was entertaining us volubly. Billy dropped a witticism too strongly savoring of incredulity, whereupon the sacristan dashed to the door, and pointing out the culprit with trembling forefinger, screamed at the crowd outside : *"eretico!*

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cretico!" In three seconds Billy was breaking the world's record down the street with a mob of furious zealots at his heels. If he had not had a track-team training at college, our outing would have ended then and there, and the above-mentioned international complications would have descended upon two departments of foreign affairs, and the care of a corpse upon me.

Well, we got to Benares and Billy's skin was still whole. After we had seen the city pretty thoroughly, Billy, the day before our departure for Darjeeling, asked our intelligent native guide if there were any Yogis near whom we might visit.

"Yes, Sahib," answered the guide. "In the grove of Krishna, a walk of two hours from the last street in Benares, lives Patanjali, the holiest Yogi in India."

"Don't say!" said Billy. "Can Pat do stunts?"

The guide's brow darkened with resentment. "I do not know what is stunts. But his name is not Pat. You must not make fun. He is too holy."

"No offense, old man," was Billy's airy apology. "What I mean is, can your reverend friend in the grove of Krishna do wonders, miracles? That is what I mean by stunts."

"Patanjali can do everything," responded the guide solemnly.

"What, for instance?"

"Patanjali has left behind all ignorance, all illusion. *Prakrit* is illusion. Patanjali has left it behind. He lives not in the body. He is one with Brahma. Brahma's power is his. Patanjali can put *samyama* on the sky when the sun is shining, and at once clouds will gather, and there will be thunder, lightning and much rain. He can put *samyama* on a dead man, and the dead man will live."

"The deuce!" was Billy's comment. "If he can use this *samyama* thing like that why doesn't he come to America and go into vaudeville? Come on! Show us Pat — I mean Patanjali; pardon me."

"I will not go if you make fun," asserted the guide instantly and positively.

"Why, my little brown brother," said Billy, "I am not making fun. You misunderstand me. I just look on the thing differently, that's all."

But it was not until I had lectured Billy on the spot, and soothed the feelings of the guide with fair words and a liberal fee, that he consented to lead us to Patanjali. But even then he scowled at Billy in a way so little to my liking that I slipped a revolver into my pocket before we started.

Billy saw me take the weapon and laughed in scorn. I made him no answer. The fact is I felt decidedly uneasy. One of those gloomy misgivings that mysteriously suggest coming disaster had crept into my mind and quite destroyed any anticipated pleasure from the visit to the Yogi. But as no one likes to be scoffed at for his superstitions, I kept my darker counsels to myself and we set out for the grove of Krishna.

Where Benares straggles to its northern boundary we left our carriage and entered the grove on foot. We took a narrow path that led through alternate tangles of undergrowth and broad spaces of soft grass, and at the end of two hours of pleasant journeying we arrived at Patanjali's hut on the slope of a thickly wooded hill. Seated before the door was the holy hermit himself. It is impossible to tell the age of those men for whom time itself is an illusion; but he appeared to be about seventy, and his long white beard, thin face, exquisite features, and noble forehead gave him a look of majestic dignity, wisdom and benevolence.

He did not heed our approach. His eyes were closed in profound meditation. He was in another world — the world of oneness with Brahma, for him the only real world. We waited in silence, not dissatisfied to contemplate that wonderful face so evidently consecrated to immovable resignation and passionless repose.

At the end of several minutes the Yogi opened his eyes — eyes that will look into my memory while I live — and observed us. We bowed respectfully. Then a deep, grave voice said:

"You are from America, a land of how vast a potency but how profound an ignorance! You could be giants, but you are as flies caught in the meshes of illusion. The true knowledge, the infinite intuition, the one real freedom are not known among you. They are known only by meditation, and in your country no one meditates."

Of course the solemnity of the occasion had to be desecrated by

Billy. "Now, Mr. Patanjali, you are too hard on us. Blame us for our real faults and I will not object. But don't call us ignorant. Ignorance is the thing above all others that we try most to prevent. We have more schools than fifty Indias rolled together."

The guide glared at Billy with eyes of fury. I told him *sotto voce* to keep his mouth shut. Patanjali stood up and took a step or two toward us, looking earnestly at his gainsayer. A faint smile lit for an instant on his lips, and he said: "Friend, you are young. When knowledge comes you will understand. Till then you cannot understand."

"Master," I said, "we would wish to take away some word of wisdom, for we know you are a renowned teacher. Will you give us some fruit of your meditations, that we may ponder on it afterwards and discuss it together?"

"Take from ancient India," he answered, "this word in India's ancient tongue: *Tvam Tat asi.* In your language it means: Thou art That! It is the sum and soul of all wisdom. It expresses the truth that the All and thyself are one. Only the All is real, and thou art the All, infinite and eternal. But only when you grow away from a world of seeming and illusion can you understand."

"Professor," came Billy's pert inquiry, "what is *samyama?*"

Again that shadow of a smile, again that grave, steady voice: "Ever the same, flitting from one thing to another like a bee in the lotus blooms! *Samyama,* Friend, is this: When we realize that we are the All, we know that the power of the All belongs to us — the boundless power that moves the seas, lifts the mountains, and surges through the omnipresent life of animals, plants and planets. If we live the life of the All, free from illusion and unmoved by passion, this power is ours also. And our application of infinite power by an act of the purified will is called *samyama.*"

"Can you manipulate infinite power?" persisted Billy.

"If I am worthy, yes. But perhaps I am not worthy. I have yet much to learn. I do not say what I can do."

"Would you mind ——"

Patanjali held up his hand. "Friend, cease! These things

are not for the profane. I will do nothing. Leave me, I pray. The sun sets. It is a holy hour with me." And forthwith he turned from us and gazed toward the western sky which was glorified with billows and battlements of golden clouds. From his lips fell the words that have been holy in India from immemorial time: *"Om manu padhme hum! Om manu padhme hum!"*

"Come on, Frank," said the disgusted Billy; "let's get away from all this moonshine. The world of common-sense for me!"

"Om manu padhme hum!" The soft music of the mystic syllables again reached our ears as we turned into the path toward what? — "the world of common-sense," or the "world of illusion?" I could not have answered then. Patanjali had strangely moved me.

On the way back Billy was garrulous in expressing his disappointment with the Yogi, and with the whole bundle of incantations and superstitions which he represented. "I am the All. I have the power of the All. I can do *samyama*. What rubbish!" he said. "Jove! what cobwebs of folly can bind the minds of men!"

So he chattered on till further comment was interrupted by our coming to a narrow place in the undergrowth and our having to walk through it in single file. I was in the lead, Billy was next, and close behind him was the guide from whom not a word had come since we had stood before Patanjali.

We had not taken twenty steps on this portion of the path when my heart stood still at a scream of agony and terror from my friend. In an instant I was at his side. He was clutching the branches of a small tree for support, cold sweat was rolling down his face, and his ghastly pallor could only come from the touch of Death. The guide had vanished. "A cobra!" gasped the poor fellow. "It lay beside the path, and that cursed guide pushed me full upon it. It struck me in the leg. God, what an end to a man's life!"

"Billy," I cried when I had assisted him to lie down, "in Heaven's name tell me what I can do for you!"

"Yes," he answered faintly; "there is just one thing you can do, one thing you must swear as my friend to do. When the

convulsions come, shoot me. Do you understand? Shoot me."

He would not let me evade the awful appeal. I had to promise that I would spare him those nameless sufferings at the end. He thanked me and closed his eyes.

"Billy," I fairly shouted as one last suggestion of despair crossed my mind; "you are going to come out of this all right. I am going back for Patanjali. He will cure you. I am sure of it. Fight your hardest till I return."

"Try it," he said; "since hope is lost anyway. But be quick. You must be here to do me that service. Thank God you brought the pistol!"

Patanjali stood unmoved in a calm that maddened me when I stammered out my story. "Can't you help him?" I almost shrieked. "If you can, or if you think you can, come! Come this instant!"

"I will go," he said.

Billy was unconscious and, as I thought, dead when we reached him. I could detect no pulse nor the slightest sign of breathing. "Too late!" I said with breaking heart. "He is gone!"

Patanjali lifted his face to the sky, closed his eyes, and breathed deeply several times. As he breathed he slowly raised and lowered his arms as though taking into himself some mysterious potencies of the upper air. Then he knelt down, placed his hands on Billy's chest, and began again his deep, rhythmic breathing. With each exhalation he pressed hard on Billy's breast and lowered his face until it almost touched that of the prostrate man. He seemed to be sending out his vital forces into a spirit that had lost its own. When these strange movements had been repeated perhaps twenty times, Patanjali said to me: "Move his arms up and down as you would to a man taken from the sea. And put your soul into it. Be confident. He will live."

Putting my soul into it as it had never been put into anything before and never has been since, I did as the Yogi ordered, and he went on with his awe-inspiring thaumaturgy. One takes no account of time at such crises, but I suppose it was a matter of three minutes when the closed eyelids fluttered and a faint tinge began to show beneath the fearful pallor. I cried out to Patanjali to observe it. He answered nothing, but a thrilling physical

change came over him. He stood up, his eyes dilated with some supreme emotion, his face became set in a look of sublime authority, his features lit up as with the glow of a mighty victory. "Come!" his commanding voice rang out. "Life is yours. Come!" And as if moved by supernatural power, the man whom I had thought dead tottered to his feet. Patanjali took his hand. "Friend, Brother, you are well," he said.

Billy gazed at him as through a mist, and then turned to me.

"Billy," I cried, embracing him, "you are well! you are well!"

"Yes," he murmured. "I feel it. I am well."

Patanjali, now in his usual immovable calm, cut short my ejaculations of joy. "I would ask you to stay with me to-night," he said, "but it will do our friend good to walk to where your carriage awaits you. If what has happened leads you to think deeper thoughts and to approach nearer to wisdom, I shall be glad. Good-night!"

"No," he replied to our efforts to detain him and to our offers of reward, "I must go. The night is too precious for meditation. I must not waste it. As for reward, help some afflicted one. You will find plenty such in Benares. Good-night and Peace!"

Billy grasped the Yogi's hand. "Venerable Friend and Father," he addressed him, "any attempt of mine to thank you would be useless. I will only say that the life I owe to you will be deeper and truer than it has ever been before." He bent his lips to the withered hand, and in another moment Patanjali was gone.

It was not an idle promise of Billy's. We have both been different men since that night in the grove of Krishna.